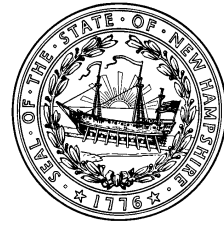


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**PRESS RELEASE**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**May 31, 2006**

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## **DHHS Announces Bird Testing Season for EEE and West Nile Virus Begins June 1**

**Concord, NH** - The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) today announced the beginning of statewide eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) and West Nile virus (WNV) surveillance season. The bird testing portion of the season runs from June 1 to October 31. Last year, seven people tested positive for EEE, with two deaths. Additionally, 54 birds, 9 horses, 4 alpacas, a llama and 15 mosquito pools tested positive for the disease. 46 birds and a mosquito pool tested positive for WNV.

"We have seen just how dangerous eastern equine encephalitis and West Nile virus can be," said DHHS Commissioner John Stephen. "Everyone across New Hampshire should know that we are entering the season in which there is a risk for getting these diseases. However, prevention and knowledge can protect you from both EEE and West Nile. Go out and enjoy the summer, but remember common sense preventive measures. The last thing we want to see is a season as severe as last year, but everyone should know that there are steps you can take to protect yourself and your family."

Eastern equine encephalitis and West Nile virus are transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito that has picked up the virus by feeding on an infected bird. EEE is a serious disease that carries a high mortality rate for those who contract the serious encephalitis form of the illness. Symptoms are often similar to the flu, including high fever, severe headache and sore throat. A stiff neck is also a symptom of the severe form of the disease, which can lead to seizures and coma. Symptoms usually occur 4 to 10 days after being bitten.

For individuals who are bitten by a mosquito carrying West Nile virus, the risk of contracting the infection is low and in the overwhelming majority of cases, there are no symptoms or just mild, flu-like symptoms. At times, West Nile virus can cause meningitis and can be a serious threat to seniors, young children and those with compromised immune systems. If illness does occur, it typically happens within 3 to 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

Individuals who identify a bird that has died or is dying for reasons other than trauma (i.e. flew into an object or attacked by an animal) should contact their local health or animal control officer. Residents of municipalities without a designated animal control officer or health officer should call the West Nile virus information line at 866-273-NILE (6453). After normal business hours, citizens can leave a voice message that will be answered the next business day.

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"The state has a comprehensive surveillance approach that includes birds, selected horses as well as mosquitoes specially trapped for this purpose. We will be testing those birds that will provide an accurate geographical picture of the occurrence of West Nile and EEE viruses this year," said Dr. Jose Montero, State Epidemiologist. "The state is requesting as well that clinicians report any neurological compatible illness and those cases will be tested and investigated as appropriate. We still want the public to notify us of dead crow, raven or blue jay sightings, and then they will be advised to dispose of them properly. We don't know exactly what type of season it will be, but there will definitely be infected birds and mosquitoes, so it is important to take protective measures such as using insect repellent to prevent WNV and EEE."

Fact sheets and more information can be found on the Department's website ([www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov)). Questions about WNV, EEE, or bird surveillance can also be answered by calling the toll-free West Nile virus information line at 866-273-NILE (6453).

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Attached:      Prevention Guidelines for West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis  
                 Bird Dead Bird Reporting and Testing Fact Sheet